are routing and are on the procedural aspect of the Act. Under the Environment (Protection) Act, EIA Notifications have also been issued from time to time by the Ministry. The representations pertaining to these Notifications have been mainly for deletion of certain items from the requirement of environmental clearance, raising of investment limit for certain items which require environmental clearance, restricting the scop of public hearing, raising the threshhold limit for certain items and delegation of powers to the State Governments.

(c) After taking into account various issues raised in the representations received from different fora, the Ministry has revised guidelines under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 from time to time to streamline the processing of development projects to cut short the delay in decision. There is no proposal under consideration to amend the Environment (Protection) Act. The issues mentioned above in respect of EIA Notifications, however, are under consideration. Further, recommendation of the Sarkaria Commission for delegation of powers to State Governments to divert upto five hectare of forest land which are urgently required for specific phublic purposes has been accepted in principle subject to requisite terms and provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the final directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court in an on going court case in whch Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is also one of the issues under consideration.

Irrigation Projects pending for forest clearance in Orissa

2619. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal to give forest clearance for some irrigation projects in Orissa is pending since long;

(b) if so, the reasons for the delay and the details of those projects;

(c) whether Government propose to clear those projects; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) to (d) A statement showing names of the irrigation projects received from the Government of Orissa and pending with the Central Government alongwith the reasons of pendency is annexed. As indicated in the Statement, the proposals will be examined on merit and decision will be taken after receipt of additional informations sought for from the State Government and/or are discussed in the Advisory Committee.

Statement

S. No.	Name of the Project	Pending since	Reasons of pendency
1.	Diversion of 47.01 ha. of forest land for construction of Malkannallah MIP in Ba-ragarh district	October, 1997	To be discussed in the next Advisory Committee Meeting.
2.	Diversion of 1042.97 ha. of forest land for Lower Indara Irrigation Project	June, 1998	Additional information sought for from State Govt. vide letter No. 8-27/98-FC dt. 8.6.98. After receiving informations, proposal shall be put up before Advisory Committee.

S. No.	Name of the Project	Pending since	Reasons of pendency
3.	Diverstion of 3.963 ha. of forest land for Jhadabandha MIP.	June, 1998	Under process with Regional Office, Bhubaneshwar.

Ban on Snake Catching

2620. SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the snake catching is prohibited;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that on account of this policy the growth of snakes and the increased death rate of snake stinging in rural areas is alarming for which no compensation is given by Government; and

(c) whether Government propose to lift the ban on snake catching?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir. Snakes are placed in Scheduled I, Part II of Scheduled II and Schedule IV of the Wildilife (Protection) Act, 1972 and their hunting and catching are prohibited.

(b) No report regarding the rise in the population of snakes leading to increased deaths due to snake bites in rural areas, had been received.

(c) No. Sir.

Ban on Felling of Trees and Timber in North-Eastern States

2621. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the continued ban on felling of trees and timber in seven North Eastern States has hit the plywood and veneer production in this area;

(b) whether it has cost the country big loss in foreign exchange earnings.

(c) if so, the estimated foreign exchange amount country has lost during the last one year;

(d) whether large number of workers have been rendered jobless due to this; and

(e) what action is proposed to be taken to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) Hon'ble Supreme Court vide order dated 12.12.1996 banned the felling of trees in all forests without having a working plan approved by Government of India as well as in the ecologically sensitive tropical rain forests of Tirap and Changlang Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Court vide order dated 15.1.1998 further directed all North Eastern States to prepare the working plans/working schemes and obtain the approval of Government of India within a period of two years and in the interregnum felling is allowed as per the annual ceiling fixed by Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Court banned the transportation of timber and timber products vide order dated 12.12.1996 from all North-Eastern States to rest of the country. However, the ban has been lifted vide order dated 15.1.1998 and transportation is allowed as per the directions contained in the said order.

(b) and (c) It is difficult to quantify the increase in import of timber etc. vis-a-vis loss of foreign exchange due to regulation of felling of trees and transportation of timber by the Court as